

CUSTOMER ASSESSMENT AND EDUCATION PROJECT

Project Background

The Research Division in cooperation with FJC &N and Dan Jones & Associates (local marketing and research firms) have been working on a project to study the perceptions and attitudes of UDOT's major customer groups. UDOT's Mission Statement in "servicing the needs of the traveling public, commerce, and industry" is contingent on having a precise understanding of our customers. The study goal was to gain a better understanding of customers, their needs, and their assessments of the quality of UDOT services. By utilizing and applying the results, we can objectively initiate an action plan designed to meet customer and stakeholder expectations thus enhancing UDOT's image, strengthening its leadership position, and changing any inaccurate perceptions. Once we know more about our customers and what they need, the Department can specifically define needs and determine to what degree customers, stakeholders, and suppliers can work together on the issues.

Research consisted of three major phases: **Qualitative Research** that included in-depth interviews with various customer groups; **Quantitative Research** that included a large scale telephone survey; and **Recommendations** that outline an action plan based on the findings of the research.

Qualitative Research

UDOT's staff had the opportunity to observe focus groups, community leaders, I-15 commuters, rural residents, and environmental leaders. In-depth one-on-one interviews were also conducted with legislators, commercial carriers, media representatives, the public and businesses who have been directly affected by UDOT projects. Several recurring themes surfaced from these interviews:

- \$ UDOT does not have a distinct, positive image as it relates to transportation issues. In fact, it is most often confused with the Utah Transit Authority (UTA).
- \$ Congestion is considered the biggest transportation problem in the state.
- \$ Communication between UDOT and constituents is sorely needed.
- \$ The public is willing to pay for transportation improvements IF they can count on direct results.

Quantitative Research

In order to verify the findings from the interviews, and to provide measurable data from the public, a phone survey of 513 Utah residents, 39 community leaders, and 35 business owners was conducted. Some highlights of the survey results are as follows:

- \$ Over 50% feel transp. issues are near or at the top of the list of problems facing Utah.
- \$ More than 40% say that traffic congestion is Utah's biggest problem.
- \$ Approximately 75% believe that funding for solving traffic congestion should be increased.
- \$ More than 70% of Wasatch Front residents would use mass transit if available.
- \$ Approximately 25% list road maintenance/improvements/repairs as a UDOT function.

- \$ Over 25% thought UDOT provided bus service or was UTA.
- \$ Most Utahns favor using media notification about impending construction projects.
- \$ Roughly 40% believe UDOT would genuinely listen if they called with a concern.
- \$ Nearly 60% favor UDOT being more assertive with the Legislature to fund improvements.
- \$ Most Utahns have had a positive or neutral experience when contacting UDOT.
- \$ 70% are unaware of plans to improve I-15.

Master Action Plan

The results of the surveys point to four major areas to improve relationships with UDOT's customers as follows:

AREA 1. Increase customer and stakeholder satisfaction on critical issues including:

T Traffic congestion, road condition, and planning

T Public & stakeholder input, involvement, communication and education

AREA 2. Increase public knowledge and understanding about transportation to include UDOT's:

T Plans, and projects

T Future issues and needs

AREA 3. Establish UDOT's leadership role in transportation by demonstrating that UDOT is:

T Managing transportation issues and highway congestion

T Preserving pavements and structures through effective planning

T Concerned about and educating the public on transportation alternatives

T Productive, progressive, organized, well trained and efficient

T More assertive with the legislature and distribute resources fairly

T Informing the public and promoting partnerships to improve the transportation system

AREA 4. Generate public support by convincing the public that they should feel good about gas tax increases to support transportation needs that in turn will:

T Convey positive public attitudes to legislators

T Allow legislators to be more responsive to transportation issues and UDOT's requests

Strategies

To effectively implement the results, the following five strategies have been identified:

STRATEGY 1. Create benchmarks to measure performance against commonly established objectives and increase public knowledge of transportation issues and plans.

STRATEGY 2. Develop and implement specific action plans based on the needs of customers and stakeholders to include:

T Legislators, public, and non-paid media plan

T Businesses Affected by UDOT

T Motor Carriers

T Environmentalists

T Community Leaders and Rural Residents

STRATEGY 3. Communicate three primary messages including:

T Current UDOT Projects

T Multi-modal Concepts

T State's Transportation Plan

STRATEGY 4. Create effective public information messages that attract user attention while providing better understanding of critical transportation issues.

STRATEGY 5. Utilize non-paid media by developing a leveraged positive relationship with the media to increase personal contact and build support for UDOT's agenda

Specific survey results or copies of reports can be obtained by contacting the UDOT Research Division @ 801-965-4196: Refer to Report # UT-95.07 Title: Customer Assessment & Education Project